

tive final-instar larvae were seen to move in well-defined processional formation when temporarily removed from their container.

From the literature consulted the final-instar larvae should have dull-red or red-brown intersegmental bands, but this was not so in any of the present final-instar larvae, in which the bands were devoid of any decidedly reddish tone. There are five larval instars. In the case of the present observations one batch of larvae attained full growth and pupated in about 53 days and the butterflies emerged from the pupae after about 20 days. There was little disparity in the incubation period of the different groups of eggs and the rate of development of the resultant larvae. Our observations represent, of course, those of a Cape winter brood of the species. The butterfly occurs throughout the year, if not equally plentiful in all months.

For the entire life-history of *Mylothris chloris agathina*, by the late Gowan C. Clark, see Van Son's work, *The Butterflies of Southern Africa*. Pt. I : 225-6, Pl. XL. (1949). The plate is, however, only a half-tone reproduction.

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## ZOPHOPETES DYSMEPHILA DYSMEPHILA (TRIMEN), A BUTTERFLY INTRODUCED INTO THE EXTREME WESTERN CAPE ON PALMS

By A. J. M. CLAASSENS Ph.D., M.Sc. and C. G. C. DICKSON M.Sc.

*Zophopetes dysmephila dysmephila*, known by its English name as the Palm Nightfighter, belongs to the family Hesperiiidae (Skippers). The natural haunts of this butterfly are found in the Eastern Cape, Natalland the Transvaal (but not the Highveld portions thereof), where it breeds on the common Date Palm, *Phoenix dactylifera* L. and another palm species, *P. reclinata* Jack.

The butterfly was first recorded from the Cape Peninsula by K. Gallon, from her home at Claremont on 10th September, 1980. Her identification of the specimen was confirmed by C. G. C. Dickson. Subsequent observations revealed that the early stages of the Skipper occurred on the Date Palms growing in the surrounding garden. This discovery of the butterfly in the extreme Western Cape was soon followed by the capture of specimens and records of early stages on Date Palms in a number of localities near and in the Cape Peninsula. Claassens and Dickson found the eggs and larvae of the butterfly on palms at Kirstenbosch on 24th May, 1981. The photographs of the early stages appearing in this article were taken from material collected at Kirstenbosch. G. J. Howard found eggs and larvae near his house at Lakeside on an earlier date. D. van der Walt caught a number of specimens on his veranda at Rondebosch,

and Dr. J. B. Ball has observed the butterfly feeding at Flowers in his garden at Pinelands. Others who have observed it, in the suburbs of Cape Town, have been Messrs. A. K. Brinkman, L. A. C. Buchanan and W. J. Copenhagen, who apparently was the first one to capture the butterfly here, without realising its significance or identifying it initially. The first specimen to be found in Cape Town itself was a dead one, picked up by V. Wykeham in the house of his father on 27th February, 1983. The early stages were then located readily on Date Palms in the vicinity of the house. The presence of the species in the centre of Cape Town was indicated, subsequently, when Dickson observed leaves which had been partly eaten by larvae on palms in the grounds of the Houses of Parliament. He also found larvae on Date Palms in his own garden. Claassens found the early stages on a young Date Palm in a garden at Hout Bay (Beach Estate). He also found them on *P. canariensis* and another palm, tentatively identified as *Chrysalidocarpus (Areca) lutescens*, the Butterfly Palm, standing between specimens of *P. canariensis*. The latter two records were from two nurseries, one at Hout Bay and the other at Constantia. These nurseries are supplied with young palms by Transvaal nurseries. No doubt other nurseries in the Cape Peninsula and in the South Western Cape introduced the early stages of *Z. d. dysmephila* in this way into these areas, and this introduction may well have started many years ago.

It may be mentioned that Messrs. V. L. and E. L. Pringle of Bedford, Cape, maintain that specimens of this species from Port Elizabeth (previously the butterfly's most western known limit) are darker than those from other localities and that, in their opinion, they represent at least another race.

At Kirstenbosch, Claremont, etc., the butterfly has established itself permanently and there must be other suitable areas where it has occurred for a number of years. In nurseries the larvae of this Skipper can do considerable damage to the leaves of young palms. On large palm trees the damage is negligible. A. L. de Villiers and C. R. McDowell (1982) pointed out that the introductions of plants from one part of the country into another can be a stepping stone to introductions of another kind. These authors referred to the Palm Skipper (as it is also called) as an example. A matter of interest which has not been investigated at all in the case of *dysmephila* is the fact that, together with the early stages, insect parasites not indigenous to the Peninsula may have been introduced there. G. C. Clark (1978) recorded parasites from all three early stages of this species.

*Dysmephila* is crepuscular and is thus not often seen in the daytime. It visits flowers at dusk and tends to be attracted to light. It is, therefore, perhaps surprising that the butterfly had not been recorded from the Cape Peninsula many years ago. It does, however, resemble a moth and this fact coupled with the butterfly's

habit of flying at dusk may have confused people, who are, generally speaking, not interested in moths. In the Cape Peninsula *dysmephila* appears to breed all the year round, but the main breeding season is during summer. C. W. Wykeham caught a fresh specimen when it was at rest on a Banana plant in his garden at about 2.30p.m., on 16th June, 1984. The butterfly can be reared easily from any of the early stages. The larvae, however, need to be supplied with fresh palm leaves of the right kind. For the complete life-history, with beautiful illustrations in colour, see Clark, *loc. cit.* One of the most striking habits of the larvae of *dysmephila* is the manner in which they construct a shelter. After eating the egg-shell the larva commences, very soon, to construct a shelter for itself near the end of a leaf, the halves of which are brought together with silken strands. They are not, however, pulled together by the larva, the process being a gradual one through, apparently, the contraction of the successive strands of silk. The extremity of the leaf is first eaten, and the larva then moves down the leaf, extending the shelter as it does so. Finally, it should be stated that there are no indigenous palms in the Cape Peninsula. The Date Palm, which is so common here today, was presumably introduced by the early Dutch settlers, possibly centuries ago.

### References

Clark, G. C., 1978, in *Pennington's Butterflies of Southern Africa*, Edited by C. G. C. Dickson, with the collaboration of Dr. D. M. Kroon. Ad. Donker, Johannesburg.

De Villiers, A. L. and McDowell, C. R., 1982. The indigenous exotic vegetation of Table Mountain. *African Wildlife*, **36** (3) : 120.

Trimen, Roland. 1889. *S. A. Butt.* III : 327-29. (Contains most interesting observations on the habits of the species by Colonel J. H. Bowker, in the Eastern Cape (as previously constituted) and Natal.)

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RECENT INCREASE IN LEUCOMA SALICIS L. (WHITE SATIN MOTH) IN HEREFORD — I have run an m.v. light in Hereford City since 1973 and the numbers of this insect have increased dramatically over this period, as the following records show. The number of individuals is given in brackets : 1973-1977 (0) : 1978 (1) ; 1979 (2) ; 1980-1982 (0) ; 1983 (17) : 1984 (70), with 35 on July 5th ; 1985 (68) with 31 on July 8th.

My orchard on the banks of the River Wye would seem an ideal habitat with a large variety of willows and poplars. Dr. M. Harper tells me that he has noticed an increase in this species in his garden near Ledbury. Is this phenomenon local or more widespread? — Dr. B. E. MILES, 68 Hampton Park Road, Hereford, HR1 1TJ.